

**Sisters' Department.****ABRAHAM'S ALTAR AND OURS.**

BY V. M. REICHARD.

The story of Abraham's sacrifice of his son is one that takes hold of the heart of every parent with a strong grip. As we read of the message, the preparation, the three day's journey, the separation from the young men, the boy's artless question as to the lamb, the building of the altar and all the preparations for the dreadful rite, the breath comes hurried, there is a sense of tightness about the chest and throat, and we feel that God acted unfairly with Abraham in asking so much of him.

But do we do less with our own children than God asked Abraham to do? Are there not altars for child sacrifice except that built on Mt. Moriah? Do not we bind our children hand and foot and lay them upon altars and slay them even to death as deliberately as Abraham had set about to do?

Let us see! A mother looks at her little girl and thinks of her social future. Every thought is bent in this direction. She is taught fine manners, which is all right; she is trained in polished accomplishments, which in its way is not so far wrong; and her head is filled from early girlhood with unnatural thoughts of love, conquest, flirtation, marriage, which is all abominably wrong. The girl's innocent child nature is sacrificed. She has her head full of thoughts which should not be there. An intellect so warped and deformed can never assume natural wholesome proportions, and the better instincts and inclinations of the girl are slain forever. With this precocious social development comes abnormal mental development.

Sentimentalism pure and simple takes the lead in the literary pabulum. Good stories told by writers of classical purity of thought and diction are thrown aside and passed by for others whose highest merit is the absence of purity. Weak, silly, namby pamby men and women figure as the heroes of these books whose chief attraction is that they attract to a life which can never be attained by the reader; and whose very attainment were it possible would be the direst calamity. Mrs. South-

worth, The Duchess, Ouida, and such like fill the shelves of our young girls while Miss Alcott, Miss Millock, Marion Harland, go unread because of the cheapness of the former, and the carelessness of parents who care neither if, nor what, their girls read.

It were a kinder thing to kill a girl outright than to murder her potentialities for good through all her descendants.

These abnormal standards which girls set up for themselves by trashy reading leads to vicious selection of associates. Living as they do in a literary atmosphere saturated with unnaturalness they seek for this among their associates and by the law of natural selection fall in only with those who are living a dilettante life. They never learn the great secret of life that to live is to labor and to labor is to love. That true living means true loving. Better far better were it, that many a girl had died in early life than have lived to become the narrow, thoughtless, selfish, creature she has come to be by being bound by trashy books and laid on the altar of trashy associates. But if there be one altar on which more girl's lives are sacrificed than on any other it is that Molock altar of *Fashion*. I care not who furnishes the styles nor what fabric is used to make women's clothes. There are other things that lie deeper than what we see in fashion plates. There are other items more costly than fabrics. This is a subject on which I can speak as one having authority, and I tell you it is a fact most sorrowful to contemplate and most alarming in its extent that not five per cent of the young women of to day are normal in their functions. This is holy ground and I, as it were, remove my shoes from off my feet when I stand thereon, but it is high time that a strong and continuous outcry be made against the all-prevailing sacrifice by mothers of their daughters on this altar. The girls are not to blame. It is the fault of the mothers. They shut their eyes and their ears and because other girls do so theirs must. Just at a time when a young girl's life is most interesting; when her sex is beginning to affect her structure, when she should be allowed free scope that nature God's noblest hand-maiden, may develop her along natural lines and in natural channels.

She is taken in hand and dressed up so that an artificial and hurtful development is the result. Tight corsets, tight and high heeled shoes, deficient clothing (and I speak advisedly when I say deficient clothing) improper food, neglect of proper personal hygiene, all these go to break down, what if left alone would truly have been a healthy hearty woman. When mothers learn that girls of fourteen are not women of twenty and can not possibly have a developed figure, when they learn that nature and not stays and corsets will develop the finest figure; when indeed they learn to know that the highest artistic type of the human female form is that found in the ancient Greek statues and not in modern wasp or its human counter part, the representatives on the fashion plates then will we have taken a long stride forward in the preservation of the health of our girls.

Some of us may catch at the word "fashion" and say "yes, but I never look at the fashion plates; I don't follow the styles." I know that a woman who will not allow her daughter to wear a corset until she is full grown is indeed a "*rara avis*." This style is most damaging because of its delusion; any girl when called to account will say, "I never wear my corsets tight, I can't stand them tight." And what they say is true but the fatal blunder they make is the corset is never enlarged to permit the expansion of the growing girl and the result is a woman of twenty years having a fourteen year old waist measure.

We condemn the practice of the Chinese in binding up the feet of children that they may never develop and yet we make the far greater mistake of binding in an unyielding jacket stiffened withal by steel and bone braces, the waists of our girls. Better far be maimed and crippled in the feet than go through life maimed in the organs filling chest, abdomen and pelvis. No wonder girls have headaches and back aches. The wonder is they have any back to have an ache in.

It is an outrage that girls should be thus treated, and were it not the "fashion" there would be a most terrific outcry against it. But as long as some girls will wear them others will follow and the great mountain of sacrificed